



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

MARCH 2013 VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3

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Will we need guns to preserve democracy?



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

When I first heard a member of the Michigan Militia declare that it was our duty as citizens to be armed and ready to defend liberty from the tyranny of the government, my reaction was to smile at his paranoia and shake my head in disbelief. My longstanding conviction has been that we would be far better off if, like England, there were no guns allowed by anyone, including beat cops.

That conviction is cracking as the corporate grip on our government grows increasingly irreversible. Multi-national corporations with allegiance to only the bottom line have been

given near-*carte blanche* to exert their influence in politics as well as the marketplace.

Advertisements touting a life of ease with endless entertainment and self-indulgence have shaped generations who value applying their smarts to financial success above all else. That same marketing machine is now dominating political advertising and exerting undue influence on the decision-making of our political representatives. These go beyond obvious ads and commercials, with messages strategically placed within the body of television shows, movies, and newscasts.

Several years ago, six corporations bought up television stations and now control all the national news broadcasts in the United States except for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (PBS). One media giant, News Corp., owns print media like the Wall Street Journal and New York Post in addition to its 27 television stations, DirecTV and a movie studio. Radio stations were also gobbled up following the relaxation of an FCC regulation that previously limited ownership to 40 stations by a single entity. One such giant, Clear Channel, now owns 850 stations and has demanded that its stations filter content to be in line with their political stance. The top internet news sites are dominated by these same corporations. We hear what they want us to hear.

The Supreme Court ruling overturning portions of the McCain/Feingold Campaign Finance Reform bill grants free speech status to corporations, permitting them to put unlimited amounts of money into political campaigns to promote their interests. Their vast resources allow them to overwhelm the air waves. Coverage of elections are now dominated by predictions, personality assessments and gossip, with very little actual discussion of issues and the actions of politicians. People were inundated with \$6 billion worth of ads during the 2012 campaigns but only two-tenths of one percent of the election discourse concerned the poor, at a time when 20 percent of the children in the United States are living in poverty.

The internet, an alternate source of information, was nearly negated by the Stop Online Piracy Act (PIPA). PIPA would make it easier for corporations to enforce draconian copyright laws, threatening the free electronic sharing of information and turning it into another profit-making vehicle for Hollywood and Time-Warner. Google and Wikipedia funded a successful battle

to thwart the corporations for now. The spending on such issues has been 1200-to-one in favor of corporations over public interest groups during the last 10 years.

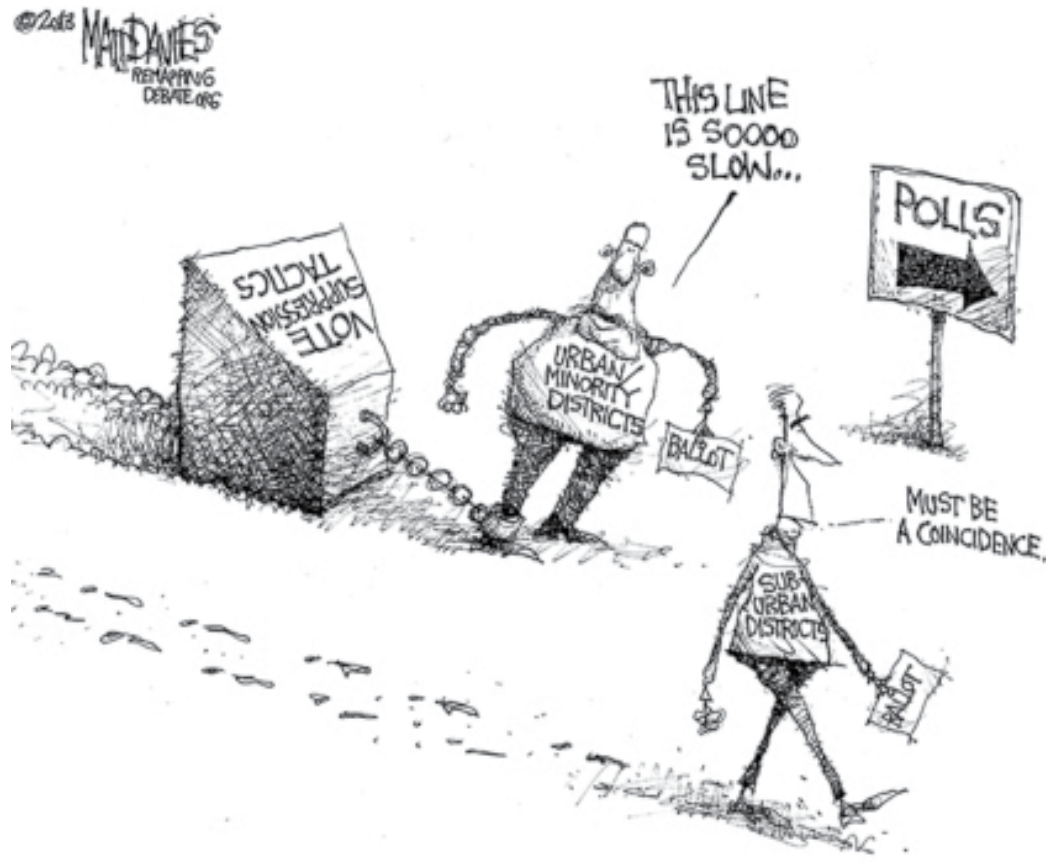
There is a synergistic effect with these developments. The media corporations now make a fortune from political ads while providing no real coverage of election issues and legislative actions – with the exception of the Presidential debate. These extraordinary profits can then be funneled into more political contributions. Since the Citizens United ruling in 2010, Super Pacs, with their funders hidden from the public until well after the elections are over, have nearly unlimited funds for running attack ads. According to Bob McChesney, Communications Professor at the University of Illinois, the principle behind the *Citizens United v. the Federal Elections Commission* ruling is that spending money to promote ideas is a form of free speech that should not be limited and that corporations also have the rights of free speech. While there are some limits on how much can be donated to a particular party or candidate as a result of Campaign Finance Reform, the ideologically-based Super Pacs are unlimited.

Pac money even influences the election of judges as well as state, county and local officials and ballot proposals. At a January panel discussion with several Michigan State Representatives and Senators, it was established that the Citizens United decision applies to all levels of government and will likely be a factor in the 2014 legislative races. It can only be nullified with a constitutional amendment or by being over-

turned by a future Supreme Court. The Michigan legislature can pass transparency laws that will help voters ascertain who is financing which campaigns, but the will to do so is not present in the current political environment. Representative Jeff Irwin made it clear that citizens from a broad coalition will have to make this a pressing issue and demand legislative action.

One group with that purpose, Up To Us Michigan, meets on the first Monday of each month at the Pittsfield Township Administration Building located at 6201 W. Michigan Ave, and welcomes others to attend. They have already prompted the city councils of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti to pass resolutions calling on Congress to propose a Constitutional amendment to clarify that the rights offered in the constitution are for people and are not extended to corporations.

If we wish to peaceably reclaim our democracy, it is time to wade into the troubled waters, find integrity within ourselves, and demand it in our political system. Change will come when we engage in meaningful conversations with each other, listening for our common interests, acknowledging each other's concerns, and calling for action that is in the best interests of our society. If we cannot stir now to restore the political power of the people, will we someday see our children rise up, bearing what arms they can scrape together, and sacrifice themselves for freedom? Perhaps we should be looking beyond the entertainment value of the song from *Les Miserables* that asks, "Do you hear the people singing? Singing a song of angry men?"



You are better than a playground



by Rev. Dr.
Martha Brunell
Pastor, Bethlehem
United Church of
Christ

Back in February of 2002, I finished up the work on my Doctor of Ministry degree with a public presentation of my study and writing. My writing had focused on preaching, speaking a life-filled and filling word in the harsh urban neighborhood in St. Louis, where my church was located. My conviction was that preaching there had something of significance to say to preaching everywhere. When an African American grandmother of my congregation was explaining to her young granddaughter what I had just completed, she happened to mention to

her that my new title was Rev. Dr. This was more a point of information, not an expectation that the girl would call me this. Her granddaughter immediately quipped back to her, "Oh, then she is Rev. Dr. Martha Luther King" now. The only time she had heard these two titles placed side-by-side was in reference to Martin Luther King, Jr., so surely we were to be in the same category. In decades of ministry, this is certainly one of my favorite things I have ever been called. A young child dug into her own cultural context and understanding and came up with an identity for me when I stepped into a fresh place in my life.

My older daughter, Amanda, had a similar experience recently. It was late in January 2013 when single-digit temperatures blanketed the Midwest. Amanda and her husband, Carmelo, both work in public health in adjoining counties in and around Rockford, Illinois. They are also both Zumba

instructors. If you are not familiar with Zumba, it is a spirited and high-energy exercise program composed of international music and dance steps with a definite Latin beat. During that very cold week, schoolchildren in Northern Illinois were restricted to indoor recess. It was way too cold to be outside. Amanda and Carmelo had been involved in a public health outreach using Zumba in one of the Rockford elementary schools in a previous season. During that frigid January week, they were called back to work with the kids again. At the end of one Zumba recess session, a first-grader walked up to Amanda and delivered these words: "Miss Amanda, you are better than a playground." When Amanda called me to tell me about her new first-grade friend, I could hear her beaming with a smile from ear to ear. A girl had pulled from her experience of childhood a compliment for a very appreciative adult.

Reaching across the boundaries of who we are and where we have been or come from can be very challenging. We don't always speak with the same metaphors or images. Different habits or relating patterns can easily separate us. However, if we greet another whose age or race, ethnic background or cultural grounding, sexual orientation or economic reality varies from our own, with a positive comment that reflects something we value we can open the door to meet each other. *Groundcover News* is an endeavor that brings all sorts of people together. That coming together can be a good blend or have rough edges. We are always working at being a community. On days when we have to work harder at appreciating our community, I try to keep in mind two young girls who at the right moment knew how to offer a bridge-building comment.

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Groundcover News exists to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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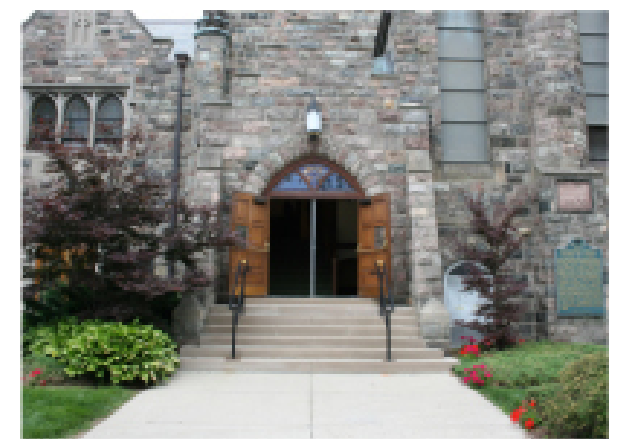
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GROUNDCOVER

WRITER'S WORKSHOP



Save the date! **April 7** 1:30-4:30 p.m. Journalist Vicki Elmer presents a workshop for writers on interviewing, storytelling and revising. Free for Groundcover writers, \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. Bethlehem United Church of Christ, 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor. To register or for more info: contact@groundcovernews.com, or call (734) 972-0926.



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March 28 ~ Maundy Thursday
6:00 pm ~ Dinner and Worship
March 29 ~ Good Friday
Worship Services at 12 noon and 7:00 pm
March 31 ~ Easter Morning
7:30 am ~ Sunrise Service
8:30 am ~ Easter Breakfast ~ Free will offering
10:00 am ~ Worship
an invitation to grow in spirit and serve with joy

Asking the tough mental health questions

by Sarah Arshad
Groundcover Contributor

“Thank you so much, you saved my life.” The first time these words were directed at me, I was one week into my third year of medical school, on my first clinical rotation – Psychiatry. I can honestly say that I had not expected to hear those words so soon, let alone on my Psychiatry rotation. Like many people, I had many preconceived notions about what I would do and see during the 6-week rotation, the patient population I would work with, and the kind of care I would provide. It took less than a month to begin to realize how incorrect my assumptions had been, and to change my mind to seriously considering psychiatry as my future career.

Mental health grows into more of a hot-button issue every day. Recent events, such as the tragic school shootings that have become increasingly prevalent in our society, raise awareness about

the state of mental health care in this country. Diagnoses such as “depression,” “anxiety,” “ADHD,” and “autism” are abuzz in the media, but in my opinion there continues to be significant stigma associated with their treatment. Going to a mental health care provider to treat one’s depression, for example, is quite different from going to one’s cardiologist to treat heart disease, or one’s endocrinologist to treat diabetes, largely because of the stigma that exists. And yet, how can we adequately manage these health problems if there is still so much shame associated with them?

One of my biggest struggles as a student in psychiatry was to attain a comfort level with asking the necessary questions. For example, signs of depression include poor sleep, decreased interest in activities, guilt, decreased energy, a decreased ability to concentrate, decreased appetite, a general slowing of one’s body, and thoughts about hurting oneself or

someone else. I was used to asking about sleep and energy, but asking someone “when was the last time you had suicidal thoughts?” took some getting used to. And if I managed to ask the question, my heart flutter, it was also difficult to hear positive responses.

As a medical student, I realized that many of the patients were more comfortable talking about these issues than I was hearing about them, and coming up with medically relevant follow up questions. This was not something I could study in my textbooks, or prepare for like I had prepared for all the required exams before we began our third year. I felt ashamed of being found so wanting, and having my patients suffer because of it.

I have also noticed the prevalence of mental health issues in popular culture. Last year’s movie *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* was a roller coaster of the emotions of a boy dealing with mental

health issues, and beautifully portrayed the rawness caused by some of these issues. Similarly, recent release *Silver Linings Playbook* depicts the struggles of suffering mental illness, and some of the many barriers that block one’s path to recovery. I personally enjoy seeing different portrayals in popular culture, because I think, “Hey, if Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence can see psychiatrists, maybe over time it will become more socially acceptable.”

So, just as it took me some time to get used to asking the right questions and delving into their significance, I encourage you to try to ask some of those questions as well, and see how you feel. If it’s difficult, just think about how much harder it would be to answer those questions with a positive response. As a society, we need to do much more to make it easier to talk about mental health issues; only then will it be possible to more broadly diagnose and treat them.

who is a part of this dialogue.

I don’t believe that I can make history, but I believe that we, as people of color, as residents of Ann Arbor, as white allies, as students, as educators, as citizens of the United States and of the world, are already enacting social change, and are in the process of making sure every human being is celebrated and validated.

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by Stacey Balter
Groundcover student intern

Growing up in a mixed Asian and white household, I have always had a precarious idea of where I belong in a society that stratifies by race. I feel like I am constantly on a learning edge to find out where my identity as a person of color starts and where my white privilege ends. I stopped going to Chinese School because I was ridiculed by my teacher and peers for being too white, but at my own high school, where the majority of students are white, I am perceived as belonging to the social group of Asians. I find myself constantly seeking validation for my racial identity.

Individuals like me are constantly looking for confirmation that we exist, that we use the same products marketed to whites on television, that we have our own communities with important celebrations, that we have needs and we have assets, fears and hopes. For one month of the year, Black History Month, our schools and society confirm that people of color, our struggles, our achievements, and our culture are real.

This year, in addition to celebrating Black

History Month, I discovered that the Understanding Race project was coming to my town, Ann Arbor, and that the student diversity group I am a part of is to facilitate dialogue on race as a part of the exhibit. I am excited to become part of a national, cross-cultural conversation on race, and hope that this opportunity may answer some of the questions I have about my place in society. There is a pervading concept of colorblindness in Ann Arbor, which is the idea that race doesn’t exist. I look forward to confronting that idea with a mixture of personal experience, statistics, and shared stories of people of color from this town.

The student diversity group I am a part of, which is located at the Neutral Zone, is aptly named S.E.E.D. – an

acronym for students educating each other on diversity, and I hope to plant the seeds of a new style of thinking in the conversations I help facilitate. We also will be holding a conference for students of color from around Ann Arbor at the Neutral Zone on March 8, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. I want people to experience an ideological shift in the way they think about race, from a micro-, person-to-person basis, to the larger, institutionalized system that keeps people divided, and also about our individualized roles in this national machine which clunks backwards, derailing progress and social change. But I also want this to be a process of discovery, for myself, and for everyone

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OccuPIE-ing America

by Carolyn Lusch
Grouncover Contributor

Do you remember those summer days when you could walk down the street at the end of a long day and encounter a piece of fresh-baked free pie in Liberty Plaza? The woman handing it to you was Sarah Fertig, who was inspired by the ideas of Senator Elizabeth Warren to share with society the pie for which society provided the ingredients. Her sugary metaphor for solidarity and compassion appealed to the Ann Arborites immediately, and her efforts earned her popularity, Facebook likes, and a profile in *AnnArbor.com*.

In March, however, Sarah and her boyfriend are taking to the open roads and living out of their pickup truck as they embark on an OccuPIE tour of America. Though Ann Arbor will surely miss her pastries, the rest of the nation is about to hear – and taste – her message. I met with Sarah to talk about her travels and plans for the future.

Q: So Sarah, what were people’s reactions when you first started giving out pie?

A: Overwhelmingly positive. Only once did we ever have a negative reaction, and I think that was from somebody that was just sort of spoiling for a fight. I just cut a slice of pie and I walked over and said, “Can I offer you a slice of pie?” He said, “I don’t want no damn communist pie!”

But really, that was the only person who ever turned down a slice of pie. Not too bad for eighteen straight weeks.

Q: I read on your website that you’re planning a trip. Can you tell me about that?

A: Yes. We are launching the official OccuPIE tour of America – we’ll be leaving Michigan on March 3, we’re taking our own sweet time across the country. We’re stopping in with friends and family along the way, and we’re landing in San Francisco around March 18. We’ve got a host for sure in Portland, we’ve got hosts for sure in Seattle and Spokane, and then we’re kind of going to go from there. The plan is to spend about six months on the road.

By the time we get to the East Coast, we’re hoping that we’ll be moderately famous. And I would really love to meet Senator Elizabeth Warren on the steps of the capitol and have hundreds of fans flocking there with pie, and then we could just have hobos and senators side by side eating pie together. And then, New York City and the Daily Show is



The shell of the home-built shelter where Sarah Fertig and her boyfriend will sleep while they tour America sharing their pies and values.

my ultimate goal.

Q: Do you expect to run across any problems with permits and stuff like that?

A: You know, people asked us that in Liberty Plaza, and so far it hasn’t been a problem because we’re not selling anything, we’re giving it away. And since we’re going to be moving from place to place so frequently, if I do run into problems in San Francisco – okay, Sheriff, we’ll get out of your town, head on to the next place.

Q: That’s a good plan.

A: Pie and run, that’s my strategy.

Q: If you get really big media attention, if you get on the Daily Show, what will you say to the world?

A: I would say the same thing I’ve been saying all along: that if everybody did something, how much better would things get? Everybody has something to offer – the richest to the poorest, the smallest to the largest – and that’s going to be probably the next big essay that I write, “Find Your Pie.” Maybe your pie is made out of sewing skills, maybe your pie is money – maybe that’s the resource that you have most available, and that’s what you can do right now. And if that’s what you have then cool, go for it.

Q: Is there anything particular about the city of Ann Arbor that helped or hindered this project?

A: Ann Arbor is great because it attracts such a diverse group of people, and yet it is a smaller city. You can walk from one end to the other without getting lost. Everything is laid out and really out in the open. And that is why I picked Liberty Plaza, because it was right between Main Street and campus.

commercialized or have it turned into something else. It’s a really unique space in Ann Arbor. And yeah, there is that sort of rougher side to it, but that’s another reason why I picked it. I wanted to inject this little bit of peace and joy and hope into a place that people don’t normally associate with peace and joy and hope.

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: I just hope people will follow our journey on our blog, and I’m really grateful to all of my pie regulars, many of whom I think are also Groundcover readers and/or sellers – I’m so grateful for all the support they gave me those first eighteen weeks.

There was an incident pretty early on where I ran out of plates. And I gave a total stranger five dollars and I asked him to go to the 7-11 and bring me plates. And not only did he bring me plates, he brought me change. And I just saw the biggest outpouring of support from the people that society makes the most invisible. So it doesn’t matter if my fuddy cousins think I’m a socialist pinko Godless commie. Cause the people that really matter, they get it. They love me. And I love them too.

Learn more about Sarah’s journey online at pietforward.wordpress.com

A: I would hate to see Liberty Plaza get

Kudos, congratulations and thanks!



Eleven Groundcover vendors braved snowy weather to learn more about selling and sharing sales techniques.

Many Groundcover vendors are working hard to get employed in the mainstream economy. Congratulations to Mansel, who found work in a local store, Shelley who found some office work in addition to her food industry employment, and to Greg O., who has acquired the credentials to work in the transportation industry and is now doing so, and also has reconnected with his family.

Kudos to Shelley, Rose, Tony, Aimee and Shawn, who completed the Groundcover resume writing workshop and soon will be pursuing more employment opportunities. Hats off to James W., La Shawn, Thomas, Cheryl, Peggy, Eddy, Clayton, Aimee, Rose, Shelley, and Tony, who completed the Groundcover advanced sales workshop. A big thank you to Greg Hoffman for preparing and leading the workshops and to Lisa Sonnenberg, Kathy Brindle, Jazelle Wilson and Ken Uehara for helping with the breakout groups and individual assistance.

Social justice conference to get “Unstuck” featured Cornel West

by Lee Alexander
Editor

An unusual conference of contemporary progressive voices, “Unstuck: Reviving the Movement for Social Justice, Human Dignity, and the Environment,” took place at the Michigan Theater on Saturday, February 16. More than 500 people attended this day-long event, which featured nearly a dozen presenters, and included music by Ann Arbor’s Spirit Singing Band, and Brian Buckner and the Incarnation Choir.

The conference, part of the University of Michigan’s Understanding Race Theme Semester, sought to illuminate some areas where social justice has hit a wall and find ways to move on.

The day began with a speech by Rev. James Forbes and concluded with a talk by Princeton professor and outspoken social critic Dr. Cornel West. The conference drew strong support from a diverse group of local religious leaders, the university community, and more than 60 volunteers. Rev. Joe Summers, from The Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, was the principal organizer of a gathering that took two years to plan.

“Part of the intention of the conference,” Summers said, “was to kind of light a fire to make the kinds of connections that seem to be so important now to this work we’re doing.”

Summers’ task was to bring together individuals who often work on causes in isolation, sometimes not recognizing how their interests are inextricably tied to the welfare of others, particularly the poor and underprivileged. The gathering wasn’t so much about organizing around specific strategies toward addressing individual issues, but challenging us to rethink how our institutions meet society’s and citizens’ most basic needs.

“For me, the partisan divide in Washington is just one reflection of a kind of ‘stuckness’ in our country,” he said, “but certainly the focus here isn’t on the divide in Washington. The focus here is on trying to get people who are working in different areas, different institutions,



Dr. Cornel West headlined the forum and met with student activists.

and different contexts to talk about where, or how, they see their institutions or movements being stuck and how they think we can get unstuck, hopefully with something they are tied into.”

James Forbes is an author, teacher, and for almost two decades led a vibrant and diverse interdenominational congregation in the heart of New York City. He shared his vision for overcoming what he called “market-driven economic exploitation, consumption, and greed.”

Forbes reflected briefly on his experience as a religious leader in New York during and directly after 9/11. He was at Ground Zero when President Bush visited just days after the attacks. He said it was there that the president encouraged Americans to go shopping and be ready to mobilize for war. At the time it was deemed intensely unpopular and deeply unpatriotic to question the use of military force as a reaction, with the attacks so fresh in America’s mind.

“The reason we are stuck today is that we, the church, did not find effective expression for many of us participating in antiwar efforts, and many of us challenged that consumerism was the solution,”

Forbes said. “You know, I wish we would have had time as a church to make our case effectively about the imperialistic, materialistic, nationalistic and world-dominating crusades.”

Chaplain Mohammed Tayssir Safi raised a similar point in his brief presentation. Safi is a U-M graduate who studied Middle Eastern and North African studies and who became a pioneer recently, becoming the first Muslim chaplain at any public university in America.

“The main thing that’s causing us to be in this situation that we’re in today is this focus on the market and on the economy,” Safi said. “It’s this focus that’s the new divinity. That’s the new God. It’s a focus on consumerism, and on owning things, and on self-gratification before everything else.”

“And what we found is that even our institutions like our churches, our mosque, and our non-profits, they’ve become so corporatized and they’ve taken on these same forms,” he said.

The big draw at Unstuck was Ivy League-educated philosopher and theologian Dr. Cornel West, now at Princeton after his very public resignation from Harvard University in 2002.

West stays consistently in the headlines now for his vocal criticism of Barack Obama, a man West worked hard to put in office, attending more than 65 campaign events for the president’s first election.

“When he does something significant, I’m with him all the way,” West said Saturday. “When he talks about increasing minimum wage, I’m with him all the way. When he talks about expanding health care, I’m partly with him because he eventually caved into big pharmacy and big private insurance.”

Just prior to delivering his address, West stressed at a small gathering of journalists and activists, why it was he came to Ann Arbor for this event.

“The kind of thing that you have done this weekend is very important,” West said. “It allows all the different folks to come in, all the different people to come together. This kind of gathering takes tremendous effort, determination, sacrifice, and service because you’re bringing people from all over and a variety of different voices, different issues and so on.”

Whether one agrees with West politically or not, his message of high moral fortitude and personal veracity is compelling. He talks often about principled notions such as honesty and justice, authenticity and responsibility.

“As a human being you want to tell yourself, promise yourself, make a covenant with yourself that you will try to be a person with integrity,” West said. “And that can be done. You have a certain kind of sense of who you are, and who you want to be. Sometimes to be a misfit is to be the one with integrity. Sometimes the one that’s maladjusted is the one who

see CORNEL WEST, page 9

Case Clothed

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Political fun: why Romney lost

by Martin Stolzenberg
Groundcover Contributor

Part 2 of a three part series– A Litany of Woes

In Part 1 of this series, the nomination process was dissected. After Mitt Romney was chosen as the Republican nominee, the battle for the presidency was seriously underway. And who could have guessed what was about to happen?

As it turned out, the first confusing weeks of the post-nomination campaign consisted of one foreign policy blunder after another. Governor Romney, despite his experience as governor of Massachusetts, has no resume in foreign affairs. So in late July 2012, in order to enhance his credentials, he traveled to England, France and Israel and met with foreign leaders. Seemingly without effort, Romney managed to alienate everyone he met overseas. The English said his campaign stop was even more disastrous than Sarah Palin’s visit four years ago. He quickly followed with a double disaster in the Middle East, managing to antagonize both the Israelis and Palestinians in a single visit!

But one can hardly blame Governor Romney for his lack of foreign policy experience; what, then, about his domestic approach? There was, of course, the way Governor Romney appealed to a wide array of voter blocs by enchanting groups like women, African-Americans, Latinos, gays and young voters. These groups were already up in arms against the Republicans: partially just for being Republicans, and partially for doing nothing to respond these groups’ concerns. Either way, the Republican party was in a political tight spot by the time of Romney’s nomination. Maybe



nothing Governor Romney said could have changed these blocs’ views toward the GOP, but he sure didn’t seem to be trying to bridge the partisan gap, either.

And then there was his endless litany of woes. Over time, the list grew to include so many gaffes that older ones were covered over by others and forgotten.

Here’s a quick refresher on Mitt’s greatest missteps:

- Creating a new anti-Romney voting bloc by alienating the United States’ 46.3 million dog-owning households with the dog-strapped-to-the-roof-of-the-car story that just wouldn’t go away
- Claiming ludicrously that Bain Capital’s raison d’être was to *create* jobs (rather than consume them)
- Pointing out how, as Governor, he filled appointments by paging

through quite a lot of “women in binders” (probably provided by Staples, the office supply chain, and one of the companies he helped create while at Bain)

- Releasing his income tax returns in invisible ink (Doesn’t the average American have access to Cayman Island tax havens and Swiss bank accounts?)
- Disowning his own child (well, legislatively speaking, anyway) – the affordable care -type act (and the foundation for Obamacare) he sponsored as governor of Massachusetts
- Proposing to end illegal immigration by promoting “self-deportation” – that is, making illegal immigrants’ lives so miserable that the poor souls would voluntarily leave the United States, the supposed “land of opportunity”

Telling prospective college students to take spare change off their parents’ bedside tables to finance their education

- Distorting the sequence of events that occurred at the United States Consulate in Benghazi in a smug attempt to embarrass the Democrats (ultimately, he merely wound up with egg on his handsome face)
- And, the biggest screw-up of them all: the off-the-cuff comment writing off 47 percent of Americans as “on the dole.” That little slip of the tongue just might go down in history as the single most offensive thing a presidential candidate has ever publicly said.

By the time September rolled around, the campaign wasn’t playing too well for the Republicans. GOP officials were in a tizzy. But there were still the upcoming presidential debates: the last chance for Mitt and his minions to hop on-board the Whitehouse Express.

Here, at last, Governor Romney really stepped up and did well. In preparing for the first debate, President Obama failed to note that Governor Romney is a pretty good debater. After all, he had just been through twenty chaotic debates with a cadre of fellow conserva-

tives and emerged the victor.

During their first encounter, President Obama seemed disconnected and unprepared. He appeared lost in space, like he was already congratulating himself, “I got it knocked. The White House is a nice address; we get Michelle’s mom as a live-in babysitter; we get to fly around in that big Air Force One plane and, it’s a sure thing that it will be another four years until we have to move out. Good thing, too: Michelle hates to move frequently.”

Or perhaps he was thinking, “This is too easy. I’ve got to give this guy more of a chance,” (as if he was ceding a spot in a game of “horse” from his favorite sport, basketball).

Whatever was on the President’s mind, Governor Romney had President Obama for lunch at that first debate. After that debacle, the race did tighten up significantly, even though President Obama fared better in the next two debates. Of course, by that time, Governor Romney wasn’t getting any help from his party. In fact, his campaign took a serious hit from the actions of those two new clowns running for the Senate: Akin and McDermott. They emerged publicly and painfully from their little car and were real bell-ringers in cutting off the women’s vote.

Desperate, the Republicans resorted to a lowbrow, slimy strategy to push Romney to the White House, reasoning, “If people don’t like us, we won’t let them vote.” Poof! In the blink of an eye, hastily-enacted voter suppression laws aimed at African-Americans, Latinos and low-income Democrats in key swing states sprung out of thin air. It’s surprising that the GOP just didn’t cut to the chase and scheme up a law that would block the Democrats from the ballot and fix the election once and for all.

But despite the increasingly-ridiculous tactical blunders of the Republican party, the stalwart GOP just wouldn’t give up hope. In fact, a leading Ohio Republican remarked after his state legislature passed draconian voting regulations that “we have just won Ohio.” No kidding. That’s almost as good as the 47 percent remark. And this arrogant remark wasn’t even effective. The courts struck down most of these laws, and

the GOP’s hubris vanished as quickly as it was conjured. But Mitt’s woes, from his tasteless comment to his talent for alienating seemingly anyone and everyone outside his demographic, were here to stay.

Be sure to see **Part 3: The Finale** as we head to the home stretch in an upcoming issue of Groundcover News.

St. Francis of Assisi PARISH

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Mass Schedule

Saturday 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 7:00 a.m. 8:45 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 12:15 p.m. 5:00 p.m.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
2250 East Stadium Blvd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Phone: (734) 769-2550 Fax: (734) 821-2102

Holy Week Worship
March 28 - Palm Sunday
8:00, 9:00 & 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m.
March 29 - Maundy Thursday
7:00 p.m.
March 30 - Good Friday
7:00 p.m.
March 31 - Easter Sunday
6:45, 8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.

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Solutions on page 11

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not “hard sell,” threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from the Vendor corner policy.

If you see any Groundcover News vendors not abiding by the code of conduct, please report the activity to: contact@groundcovernews.com 734-972-0926

ACROSS

- Termini
- Style
- The _____, Steve McQueen movie
- Versifier
- Gladden
- Mature
- Man or Skye
- Hesitation
- Absolutely!
- Porcelain figure
- Oxygen molecule
- Lubricant
- Dry goods merchant Strauss
- Tennis serve
- Liquefy
- Polo stick
- Habits
- Manufacturer of the A5 Cabriolet
- Epithet
- Aleutian island
- Pastry
- _____ my word
- Adherent (suffix)
- Mumbai's location
- Proofreader's marks
- Listen
- Loud sound
- Actress Grant
- Time periods
- Legislation
- Mythological creature
- Straw topper
- Secondhand
- Insults
- Punk
- Actress Perlman
- Piece of meat
- Woodwind
- Simple
- Tropical fish
- Subarctic city

DOWN

- Narrative
- Snack
- Eatery
- Shorthand expert
- Interfere
- Margarine
- Statuesque

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8. "_____ Depends on You"

9. Elfín

10. Tropical seed

11. Luxury car

12. Unrestricted

13. Good (Italian)

21. Aspirations

22. Eggs

25. Radiate

26. Inundated

27. Terra _____

28. Use the door

30. Vientiane's country

31. Garment

33. Jacket part

34. Dramatize

35. Taut

37. Thanksgiving

39. Paired

42. Comedian Carvey

46. Unwanted email

48. Be wrong

50. Baked _____

53. Rancor

55. Cart

56. Certain

57. Rebecca Hazlewood role

58. Golfer's equipment

60. Assist

61. Approach

62. Vagabond

63. Particle

64. "How do I love _____?"

66. Tokyo's timezone (abbr.)

Puzzle by Jeff Richmond

March Calendar of Events

March 5/12/19/26 – Tuesday Resume Clinics, 9-11 a.m. Washtenaw County Michigan Works! Career Transition Center, Key Bank Building, 2nd Floor, 301 West Michigan Ave., Ypsilanti. More info: call (734) 544-6799; TDD (800) 649-3777.

March 6 – Groundcover Volunteer Meeting, 7-8:30 p.m. Join in the production and distribution of Groundcover News. Bethlehem United Church of Christ, Room F1 (elevator to B), 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor. More info: contact@groundcovernews.com, or call (734) 972-0926.

March 11 – 12th Annual Wege Sustainability Lecture: Achim Steiner, “The Imperative of Change: Environmentalism in the 21st Century,” 5-7 p.m. Steiner, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), discusses the implications of new concepts and forces shaping environmental discourse today. Free to the public. U-M Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. More info: (734) 763-3333, <http://snre.umich.edu>.

March 12-23 – Rotate Your Food Drive 2013, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Drop off canned and other non-perishable food items at numerous participating businesses in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Dexter, and Saline. For collection locations, visit www.foodgatherers.org, or call (734) 761-2796.

March 21 – 2013 Motorola Lecture: Rinku Sen, “Building New Majorities:

Achieving Racial and Gender Equity in Life and Politics,” 7-9 p.m. Sen is president and executive director of the Applied Research Center, a national home for media, research, and activism on these issues. Free to the public. Walter and Leonore Annenberg Auditorium, Room 1120, U-M Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, 735 S. State St., Ann Arbor. More info: (734) 764-3490, www.fordschool.umich.edu.

March 26 – “Take a Chance Tuesday”: live & free music at The Ark, 8-10 p.m. Food Gatherers benefit concert featuring local musicians. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. Free; donations of nonperishable food items accepted. More info: (734) 761-1451, www.theark.org.

March 28 – “Health Disparities by Place: A Dramatization of Health Disparities in Washtenaw County,” 5:45-7:45 p.m. Free public performance depicting the different dimensions of health disparity in our area. Registration required. Michigan League Ballroom, 911 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. More info for this and other Understanding Race events: www.lsa.umich.edu/themesemester.

March 29 – “Peace Generator” Monthly World-Healing Peace Circle, 7-9 p.m. Join in silent prayer or focused meditation toward peace, understanding, joy, and healing for your family, the world, and yourself. Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth, 704 Airport Blvd., Ann Arbor. More info: www.peacegenerator.org, or email info@peacegenerator.org.

Religious Action for Affordable Housing: raising funds for supportive services

by Susan Beckett

From its inception, Religious Action for Affordable Housing (RAAH) was intent on ending homelessness in Washtenaw County by identifying and providing what was needed. RAAH formed in 1999 when then-First Presbyterian Church minister and University of Michigan ecumenical center director, Niles Harper, saw a need for an additional funding stream for affordable housing in Washtenaw County. He recognized the power of the religious community to galvanize action and mobilize resources, and he set about forming an interfaith coalition to do just that.

“It was apparent that we didn’t need another non-profit corporation developing housing, but that we needed more financial support for existing organizations,” said RAAH President Wendy Hatem. She went on to say that their overhead is miniscule, as they have no paid staff or office. They are given meeting space by the Church of the Good Shepherd and receive their mail at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church.

The proposed Avalon Housing project to build a low-income apartment complex on Carrot Way received advocacy and financial support from RAAH. They raised funds locally and from religious foundations, and contributed \$200,000 in “gap financing” toward the Carrot Way construction. RAAH members attended planning and city council meetings and spoke in favor of the project. Financial support from RAAH is now considered de facto community support and acts as a project endorsement, which is important to larger funders. RAAH members also inform their congregations and the community at large as to why more affordable housing is needed and how it is best



RAAH president Wendy Hatem outside the Carrot Way apartment complex RAAH helped finance. RAAH now seeks \$100,000 to fund supportive services in low-income housing units.

implemented. They do the legwork so congregations know their donations will be used optimally.

Recently, RAAH provided \$40,000 to relocate residents of the Parkhurst Complex while it was razed and rebuilt, after it was determined that refurbishing the units was not cost-effective. One resident spoke at a RAAH board meeting of how grateful she was that project people worked with her to find interim housing that allowed her children to stay in the same school.

Last year, RAAH conducted a survey of faith organizations and housing providers to determine their next course of action. Despite the need for more affordable housing, very little new construction was underway or anticipated due to the scarcity of government seed money. However, there was a great need for funding for supportive services.

“Supportive services are essential to maintaining housing for the neediest,” Hatem said.

The prevailing wisdom, known as Housing First, is that chronic

homelessness and another issue, like drug abuse or illness, are often intertwined, and that the best way to stabilize the underlying issue is to first stabilize housing. That way the person can be located for treatment, have a safe place to keep medication, and operate with the peace of mind that there will be a safe place to spend the night. The catch with this approach is that the newly housed person often arrives with a lot of emotional baggage that they will need help with, especially at first, to retain their housing and embark on a treatment plan. So, agencies like SOS, Avalon Housing, and Michigan Ability Partners (MAP) integrate professional services and community support into some of their housing communities.

Supportive services have proven very effective, but the need generally outstrips the available resources to compensate those providing the services. Consequently, RAAH has undertaken a capital campaign to fill that gap by raising \$100,000 by May 20, 2015. The beneficiary will be the Frequent Users of Systems Engagement (FUSE) project, a collaboration between low-income housing providers, medical services and Catholic Social Services (CSS), that aims to stabilize frequent users of emergency health services. Avalon Housing, MAP, and Michigan Prisoner Reentry will provide the housing; CSS will provide the social supports; and area hospitals, Huron Valley Ambulance and the Washtenaw Health Plan will refer qualifying patients and track their outcomes.

The experiences of a relatively new Avalon tenant illustrate the program’s potential. In the year before he moved in to an Avalon unit, the man, who has multiple health issues including a seizure disorder and a history of substance abuse, had been taken to the emergency room

by ambulance 36 times. In the year since, he only had to be taken to the hospital three times. That represents tremendous savings in health care costs on top of the drastically improved quality of life for the individual.

The MAP project is slated to receive \$25,000 in supportive services for the single adults with disabilities who live in their Whispering Creek apartments in Ann Arbor. Their prior funding source dried up during the recession. Michigan Prisoner Reentry will also receive \$25,000 in services to help those returning to society from incarceration make the adjustment and find gainful employment. The balance of \$50,000 will go towards serving Avalon clients, primarily at their Carrot Way complex.

Funds for the capital campaign will come from designated contributions and membership fees. In addition to congregational and organization memberships whose annual dues range from \$100-500 based on the number of members, there are individual at-large members who pay dues of \$10. Members receive newsletters and invitations to events.

At-large members have a passion for social justice. They see solving the housing crisis as a foundation for solving other problems and avoiding trauma for children. So, even though many are congregational members of RAHH, they become individual members, too, as an expression of their faith and passion. RAAH members attend planning and city council meetings and speak out on the need for affordable housing; they continue to ask when the 100 units of single occupancy housing once available at the Y will be replaced.

Information about RAAH and membership dues for organizations can be found online at www.raah.org. To join RAAH or make a designated contribution, send a check and mailing information to: RAAH c/o St. Andrew’s Church 306 N. Division Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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One day at a time: a look at dialysis

by Karen L. Totten
Groundcover Contributor

The Numbers

12,293. That number represents the population of Michigan residents who are currently on dialysis, according to Dialysis Patient Citizens, a national non-profit group governed by dialysis patients. The number is nearly 400,000 people nationwide. Most of these people got there because of chronic kidney disease (CKD), where the function of the kidneys decreases over time due to various factors, and the person is left with 10 or 15 percent function, or less.

The route to CKD is different for each person, but having uncontrolled high blood pressure will do it, as can being obese; in fact, obesity is strongly associated with the onset of Type II diabetes, another risk factor. Some people have a history of CKD in their families. Still others get to kidney failure through HIV, sickle cell anemia, steroid use or drug abuse.

The connection between diabetes and CKD is concerning, given that over 1 million Michigan residents have been diagnosed with diabetes. Another 2.6 million are pre-diabetic with higher-than-normal blood glucose levels, according to the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan. These numbers are staggering. And officials fear the people who will be diagnosed with diabetes in the future are increasing in number, due, among other things, to the obesity epidemic.

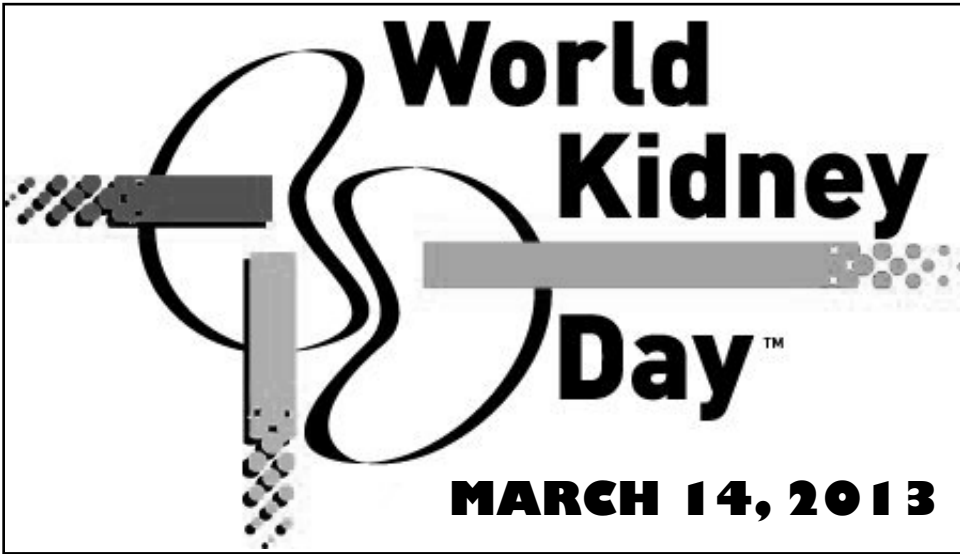
Michigan has one of the highest obesity rates in the country – 32 percent of Michigan adults are obese and 17 percent of youth fit that definition, according to NKF. One is obese when one’s BMI or body mass index exceeds 30. Body mass index is calculated by dividing one’s weight in kilograms by a person’s height in meters, squared. This means, for a person 5 foot 9 inches (175 cm) tall, a weight of over 203 pounds (92 kg) is considered obese.

At the current rate of growth, nearly 1 in 4 Americans will be diagnosed with diabetes by 2050, 80 percent of cases attributable to obesity. This could lead to more kidney failure and, hence, more dialysis patients.

Kidneys Sure Do A Lot

Most people are born with two kidneys, fist-sized organs located on either side of the spine, just below the ribcage. They have a distinctive “kidney bean” shape.

In the process of making urine, the kidneys remove wastes from the



body and control chemical balances. Without proper removal from the body, fluid can build up in the legs, making walking difficult, or around the heart or lungs, affecting breathing, or in other parts of the body. Our kidneys help control blood pressure and help keep bones healthy. Kidneys also help make red blood cells by sending a messenger hormone to the bones. One problem CKD sufferers often struggle with is anemia.

Excess fatigue, and foggy, unclear thinking can afflict people with stage-five kidney disease. Some have joint pain or itching. Kidney failure can also prompt nausea, or loss of appetite. The only treatments for end-stage CKD are transplant or dialysis. Many people wait several years for transplants, or never get them at all. In Michigan, currently over 3,000 people are awaiting kidney transplant, according to the National Kidney Foundation.

A working transplant can restore health. Transplanted kidneys take up the work of the original organs and with the help of immunosuppressant drugs to prevent rejection, can return a person to a normal life.

Many dialysis patients can survive years on that modality, but life expectancy figures are concerning: according to the American Kidney Fund, only 35 percent of patients in the United States survive for five to six years. These figures reflect that some patients start out sicker than others, some are elderly and elect to discontinue treatment, and some persons are fighting other diseases, such as cancer.

What Does Dialysis Do?

There are two different types of dialysis: hemodialysis, which takes place at a center or at home with a special unit, and peritoneal dialysis, which also can be done at home or wherever a clean setting can occur. The choice of modality is not always the patient’s, as health history, anatomical factors,

or other concerns might exclude the patient from one or the other.

Hemodialysis involves the surgical placement of a graft or fistula, usually in the arm, to provide an access for the dialysis needles. The needles are hooked to an artificial kidney (a cylinder lined with thousands of tiny fibers that acts as filter) by tubing which carries blood from the patient, through the filter where it is mixed with dialysate prepared to a prescription which helps draw the toxins out of the blood. The process takes anywhere from three to five hours, typically, and occurs three times every week.

Peritoneal dialysis is done through a catheter that has been surgically placed in the peritoneal cavity of the body. Dialysate flows into the body through tubing connected to a catheter. The dialysate fills the spaces in the peritoneal cavity and the person’s belly lining naturally filters the toxins and wastes. To work, the dialysate must stay in the body 2-3 hours. This is called dwell time. After that, the fluid is drained, and fresh dialysate is installed. This process happens several times throughout the day, depending on a person’s body size and other factors.

The Dialysis Diet

White rice, baked chicken, green beans and applesauce. Every day. Not really. But it seems that way.

Here is sample list of foods that dialysis patients need to avoid or carefully limit because of their phosphorous content: hard cheese, cottage cheese, brown rice, black beans, kidney beans, peanuts and cashews, walnuts, all nuts, ice cream, yogurt, milk, chocolate, hot or cold cocoa, cola drinks.

And some foods to avoid for high potassium content: raisins, oranges, bananas, kiwi, pumpkin, squash, avocado, spinach, potatoes (unless leached), potato chips, tomatoes.

Some phosphorous, but not all, is

removed during the dialysis process. A high phosphorous level will pull calcium, out of the bones, weakening them and possibly leading to joint pain and easy breaks. Potassium helps regulate heartbeat. If levels get too high, a person is at risk for heart attack. In fact, sudden heart attack, whether related to potassium levels or not, is the leading reason for death in dialysis patients, according to Science Daily.

Laura’s Story

“On dialysis, you have to pace yourself, emotionally. If you aren’t strong enough, you want to give up.” So says Laura Mitchell, 49, from Ypsilanti, a dialysis patient since August 2007.

Laura would know from challenges. She has had five different locations for grafts in both her arms, and now one leg (since July 2012). Many of her grafts required painful de-clotting procedures, up to nine in one arm, which is the reason the graft locations kept being moved. Laura’s small veins created problems for blood flow.

For a while, Laura tried peritoneal dialysis, but had to switch back to hemodialysis when she developed gastroparesis, which meant her stomach muscles stopped working. She couldn’t take in adequate amounts of dialysate to do proper treatment. It also affected her ability to eat. “I had to take very small bites of small portions, in order to get nourishment,” she says.

Like many people, Laura’s diabetes, with which she was diagnosed in 1991, put her at risk for kidney failure, especially as it was accompanied by high blood pressure.

Despite her situation, Laura is a bright sunny presence in the center where she dialyzes. She greets everyone, patients and techs, doctors, nurses and staff, with a hug or cheery smile. “It doesn’t hurt to be kind to someone,” she says. Attitude has carried her a long way. “The best way to deal with this to be positive. I don’t think ‘why me?’ I thank God for my life, for my husband.”

Of course, there are days when Laura just wants her privacy: “The techs know when I’m not feeling well. They just cover me up with my blanket and let me sleep.”

Laura has some reservations about going on the transplant list. “Maybe, eventually,” she says. For now, she takes her life one day at a time.

March 14 is Kidney Awareness Day! Show your support for organ donation by signing up to be a donor. Go to www.Michigan.gov/sos.

Dialysis diary – October 2012: yearning for a miracle

by Karen L. Totten

It’s three p.m. by the time I return home from dialysis, five hours and ten minutes after I set out for the cross-town drive, down Huron Parkway to Packard and over to Industrial. The parking lot was full so I navigated my car into a spot around the corner from the unit. Jenna called me back barely a minute after I sat down in the lobby, lugging my blanket, book and lunch in a straw bag I bought this summer. Something more weatherproof would be better for winter. Maybe I won’t be coming here then. Hope glimmers on the edge of my thoughts.

Jenna is not my tech today. A new person. Laquoia, will be my day’s companion. I stop at the scale to get

my start weight. Frustratingly high. I weighed almost half of what I do now when I was in college. Can’t think about that now. Wash my hands and graft and then head over to the chair where Laquoia has laid out the instruments. The chair is a little big and my feet dangle over the edge the way they did when I was a girl at the dinner table. I unpack my bag – snack of peaches and Town House crackers, a book, headphones in case I watch TV, a cotton Christmas blanket because it’s always cold in there. The chair is heated and I turn it on high right away.

The tech programs the machine to give me the day’s treatment. It’s always a different machine and a different tech. I feel that I need to be formally introduced to this piece of technology

that slurps my blood through the straw-like tubes and then returns it to me, washed, and fresh and free of toxins. *Monday fresh on Tuesday.* I can’t say I have ever looked the machine right in the face. I don’t watch the tech cannulate my graft, arterial on the inside and venous on the outside. This turning away is likely for the best. I’ve fainted before while receiving a shot. The sight of blood gives me a queasy feeling. The pain of the needle sticks – a burning and stinging for a minute or two. I’ve gotten better at it these last four-and-a-half months.

Like lots of other people here, I am waiting for a transplant. The list wait time is four to seven years in Michigan, shorter in Ohio, where some Michiganders list as well. It feels like bad karma to wait for someone to pass so that I might have a kidney. I try not to look at it that way; people do die anyway and it only seems practical... but I don’t like that train of thought, either. Transplant has its own problems – the weight gain and strong drugs, cancer risk and ever-present threat of rejection, which leads back to dialysis.

I sit back and try to ignore the noise of machines and alarms and the business of the techs and the nurses. I’ve brought *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. This book I’ve read already several times but it is like comfort food; Harry is on the run from Voldemort. It’s a child’s tale, but what better thing to do than pretend? Plus, I try out a few of the spells. *Accio*, pen! They never work. This disproves the theory of the extreme right that the books teach magic. They are, rather, about the power of love. Dumbledore made it clear to Harry that love is the most important thing, stronger than fear or misuse of power. In *Order of the Phoenix*, he told Harry, whom Voldemort had been unable to possess, “In the end, it mattered not that you couldn’t close your mind. It was your heart that saved you.”

I am sleepy and doze off in the chair. I don’t like sleeping here, even if it does help pass the time. I think I sleep

with my mouth open. It’s endless, this wash cycle; I start to wonder if they dress the machines up like vampires for Halloween. No one seems to find this amusing when I ask about it. As I said before, these machines are keeping me alive and I don’t even know their names.

Finally, after three-and-a-half hours the treatment ends, the needles are pulled, my arm is bandaged and I am sent home after getting a dry weight. They have taken two kilos of fluid off me today. It was an uneventful treatment, no cramps or nausea, no light-headedness. And yet, I can’t wait to leave.

The humming starts not long after I am home. That high pitched sound in the ears. The throbbing pulse of the blood in my veins. Humming, hum. The machine is inside of me. The machine is part of me. And I lay down on my bed, hoping sleep will pull me into restful dreams. But sleep isn’t going to happen just now. I turn on the computer and set to watch *The Daily Show*. Something to amuse me out of my cranky mood and distract me from my thoughts. J.K. Rowling is Jon’s guest. She talks about living on welfare for several years while working on the Harry books. She makes an interesting point: if you notice, she says, the magic in the books does not always solve the problems of the characters; in fact, it often complicates things. So the wizards are left to work things out as best they can, with thought and effort, and not with magic.

This does not make me happy. I am yearning for *deus ex machina* in my own life – God swings down from heaven to heal me and I need neither transplant nor dialysis. This is magical thinking. I might as well be two years old.

I have a day off before another treatment. It’s indescribably delicious, this freedom from the machine, this time of my own to do as I like. I resolve to be grateful for small pleasures. I shove certain thoughts to the back of my head and get on with living.



Cryptoquote Solution

Nobody made a greater mistake
than he who did nothing because
he could only do a little.
— Edmund Burke

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Bringing in the green – easy spinach recipes

A guest at a dinner party sadly remarked that he knew only one way to prepare spinach. Hence this homage to spinach, one of the healthiest and most available of vegetables.

Hardly Creamed Spinach

Creamy without being wet, this is lovely mixed with pasta or as a vegetable side with any simple protein and starch.

Ingredients: Frozen chopped spinach, cream, butter

Preparation: Thaw spinach and squeeze out as much water as possible. Warm over medium heat with just enough cream to coat until hot, then throw in a little butter before serving. Mix and present as a side by serving with an ice cream scoop pressed onto the plate, making tidy hemispheres.

Lemony Spinach

Ingredients: Fresh spinach, juice from whole lemon, salt, oil (I use garlic-infused olive oil)

Preparation: Heat oil in large frying pan over medium heat, then add some of the spinach and salt to taste (about 1/2 tsp. for 4 servings). Stir and add more spinach until you reach your desired servings and the spinach is limp and bright green. Remove from heat and douse with fresh-squeezed lemon juice (about half a lemon's worth for 4 servings) and serve.

Spinach with Feta Casserole

This combination can be placed in puff pastry to make a one-dish meal, or cooked in a casserole dish as a hearty side dish.

Ingredients: Spinach, eggs, cubed



or crumbled feta cheese, oil, garlic, chopped onions, sliced mushrooms, chopped Kalamata olives, salt and pepper, thawed puff pastry.

Preparation: If using frozen spinach, thaw and squeeze out water. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Heat oil over medium heat in a Dutch oven or large saucepan. Add onion and sauté until soft, stirring occasionally. Move to side and add mushrooms, raising heat to medium high. Cook until browned, turning once. Add garlic and reduce heat to medium-low, then add spinach with a dash of salt and pepper to taste. If using fresh spinach, fit in what you can, toss to get hot onions on top of spinach, cover and let it cook for a minute or two before adding more spinach and tossing again. Repeat until all your spinach has been added. Remove from heat.

In a separate bowl, beat one egg and more pepper for every 12 ounces of spinach you are using. Drain water from spinach, then combine spinach and egg, add up to 1/3 pound of feta cheese for every 12 ounces of spinach, and mix well. Add olives, if desired. Turn into an oiled casserole pan or Dutch oven (I re-use the one I sautéed in) or line a baking dish with thawed

puff pastry (can be found frozen in the grocery store) overlapping the sides, fill with spinach mixture, and top with more puffed pastry, pinching together the top and bottom layers of pastry to

seal. You can dip your fingers in water to help seal, if necessary. Bake in center of oven for about 30 minutes or until lightly browned on top and the sides start pulling away from the edge.

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